

Some of the Merchants Who Are Doing Things in the 1600 Block



J. Hill.



C. A. Reinhardt.



Leo Victor.



Sam W. Bowby.



O. W. Billings.



Fred E. Burgert.



H. C. Holtorf.



John W. Jones.



A. C. Schaller.



C. H. March.



C. A. Williamson.



J. H. Paulsen.



H. J. Kain.

1600 BLOCK WAS CENTER OF CITY BEFORE THE WAR

Built Up Almost Solidly With Brick Stores in Early Part of the '60s.

GOT BENEFIT FIRST BOOM

Many Well Known Pioneer Business Concerns Had Quarters on Old Illinois Street.

When Rock Island was a mere village, before it was known as Rock Island, in fact, the place where the 1600 block now stands was the business center of the place. As is generally known, Farnhamburg was the first settlement here and that was located on the bank of Sylvan slough at the foot of Twenty-ninth street. Later Stephenson was laid out farther west and the 1600 block was the center of this for a number of years. After the two villages were united under the name Rock Island, the site of the present 1600 block continued to be the center of business activity. A row of wooden buildings on each side of what was then Illinois street, but which is now Second avenue, housed the main business firms of the city. Seventeenth street was then known as Eagle street.

When the Rock Island railroad entered the town in 1855 the impetus for a boom was started and soon business houses of brick were built on both sides of the 1600 block.

As far back as the early '60s, with the exception of the Rock Island house and the Illinois theatre building, all of the buildings now located in the 1600 block had been erected. The old wooden structures were torn down and more lasting ones were erected.

Big Dry Goods Store. In the '60s the largest dry goods store in the city, in fact the biggest within a radius of a number of miles in Illinois, was that of Mitchell & Parsons. This store is now occupied by Billings & Herzog.

East of this place of business was the clothing store of Bamberger & Burgower. Bamberger & Burgower were the first occupants of the store now leased by the Bowby Music house. Block & Newberger had a millinery and dry goods store where the Hill Furniture company is now located. Mrs. Caroline Kreis, mother of E. B. Kreis, was head milliner.

On the opposite side of the street from Billings & Herzog's was the Don & Elliott Hardware store. Later Elliott moved to the west, and David Don purchased the interests of his partner.

As now, two drug stores were located in the block in the early days. In fact, the only two pharmacies of which Rock Island boasted were in this block.

The first to open a store was Fahnstock & Lewis. This firm conducted an establishment where the Leo Victor shoe hospital now stands. Later C. A. Fahnstock purchased the interests of his partner and conducted the store alone. In the early '60s Charles Benser purchased the store.

Paid \$300 Year Rent.

About 1863 Mr. Benser removed his store to the corner of Illinois and Eagle streets, where the Thomas Drug company is now located. The building had previously been used as a grain warehouse and was a very desirable location as in the early days the farmers all drove into Market square, and naturally the big portion of the trade then was that of the tillers of the soil. Mr. Benser signed a lease for the building for three years, paying a rent of but \$300 per annum.

John Bengston, who was then in Mr. Benser's employ, urged his employer to sign a 10-year lease, claiming that at the end of the three years the rent would be increased, probably doubled. The prediction came true, and at the expiration of the lease the owners increased the rent.

Conrad A. Spidel, who had been located in the Buford block, where the Beat building now stands, removed to the present store of A. J. Riess, in the '70s.

The best hotel in the old days was the Rock Island house, situated in a wooden building where the present hostelry bearing that name is now located. The hotel then occupied the western half of the structure, and the L. Simon & Co., later Simon & Moserfeld, clothing merchants, occupied the eastern half.

The hotel was owned and conducted by Stephen Woodin, and many of the older residents can still remember the old frame house. Isaac Negus, father of William O. Negus, present owner of the Rock Island house, purchased the old frame hotel and in the early '70s erected the present brick structure.

Coat Made Here Preserved.

Isaac Heinsfurter conducted a clothing store where the candy kitchen now stands. Mr. Heinsfurter gained a big reputation for his place of business, as he was not only a clothier but a merchant tailor as well. John Volk, the contractor, still has in his possession an overcoat which was made for him by Mr. Heinsfurter.

William Kale was also an early business man in the city who occupied quarters in the 1600 block. He conducted a barber shop and later a saloon on the second floor of the building occupied by Mr. Heinsfurter. Mr. Kale was the father of Henry Kale, who now conducts a buffet at the corner of Second avenue and Seventh street.

Schweiber & Reed were also early business men in the 1600 block. They conducted a stove and hardware store on the south side of the street near the center of the block.

Following the erection of the Rock Island house the new business firms seeking quarters built up the 1700 block, but for years the 1600 block contained the largest and most representative business houses in the city.

Although practically all of the buildings now standing in the 1600 block were erected over half a century ago,

Concerns in the 1600 Block

Nos.	Proprietors.	Businesses.
1600	William M. Beal	Tailor.
1601	Byron E. Lukens	Buffet.
1602	Illinois Theater	Playhouse.
1603	A. J. Wright	Restaurant.
1604	Clarence H. March	Cigars.
1605	Wells Fargo & Co.	Express.
1606	F. D. Schmidt	Buffet.
1607	A. J. Riess	Drugs.
1608	Leo Victor	Shoe Hospital.
1609	Samuel W. Bowby	Music House.
1610	Louis G. Francis	Candy Kitchen.
1611	Billings & Herzog	Women's Wearing Apparel
1612	America Express Co.	Express.
1614	Abraham Aronson	Palace Dye Works.
1615	Hill Furniture Co.	Household Furnishings.
1616	Thoams Simcox	Buffet.
1618	N. P. Tucker	Printing.
1619	John W. Jones	Cut Rate Loans.
1620	John H. Paulsen	New and 2nd Hand Goods.
1621	Herman C. Holtorf	Barber.
1622	J. P. Williamson	New and 2nd Hand Goods.
1623	Ed Simmons	New and 2nd Hand Goods.
1624	The Argus	Daily Newspaper.
1625	Rock Island House Co.	Hotel, Cafe and Buffet.
1626	Kain & Reinhardt	Bijou Pool Room.
1628	Buehler Bros.	Meat Market.
1630	Thomas Drug Co.	Drugs.

yet they were constructed of a material which has proven durable.

The buildings have all been remodelled several times and new fronts have been installed. Second avenue was paved in 1889, being the first street in the city to be so improved.

TUCKER THE PRINTER.

One of the busiest places in the 1600 block the year 'round is the plant of Tucker, the Printer, located at 1618 Second avenue. N. P. Tucker is proprietor.

Before locating in Rock Island Mr. Tucker was a traveling salesman for a large type firm, but home life appealing him more than on the road, he located in this city and opened a print shop on Third avenue, between Seventh and Eighteenth streets.

After making another change in location he removed to his present stand in 1904.

He occupies two floors, and does general job printing. The largest portion of the material he produces is book work, getting out booklets from 20 to 200 pages. He claims to have the best equipped shop in the city, and has on display for the benefit of prospective customers samples of the work he has done since he has been in Rock Island.

AMERICAN EXPRESS CO.

The office of the American Express company is located at 1612 Second avenue. M. J. Jones is the agent. The local office handles express packages over the Northwestern railroad via Davenport.

BOWBY MUSIC HOUSE.

For the past 37 years the Bowby Music house has stood for quality in musical instruments. Today the Bowby Music house is located at 1609 Second avenue, where that quality draws forth customers seeking that which will bring them the best in music.

The story of the late David LeRoy Bowby who founded this house, is one of interest. Years ago he was traveling salesman for the W. H. Kimball Piano company. He traveled in the territory in which Rock Island was located.

Desiring to give up the life of the road, and make a more permanent home, where he could spend all of his time, he resigned the avocation of commercial traveler and under the Harper house in 1877 established the Bowby Music house.

With a keen knowledge of all musical instruments, the likes and dislikes of the buying public, he built up for himself a patronage that continued to grow and which is still expanding each year. The public soon learned of his knowledge of the stock he had for sale, and they conferred with him before buying. They heeded his advice, and as he never misrepresented any article in his store they placed great faith in him and with this confidence came more patronage.

It was not then strange that the quarters under the Harper house became too small. In two years he removed to 1726 Second avenue, where he had larger floor space. This was in the Robinson building, and for ten years he remained there, but again he found the store too small, so he removed

to 1609 Second avenue, where the business is still conducted.

In 1905 Mr. Bowby died, and his son, Sam W. Bowby, the present owner, who had been reared into the business, receiving the benefit of his father's instruction, and a practical experience, became the proprietor of the music house.

He continued in the policy established by his father. The house contains a fine line of pianos, organs, and all other musical instruments. Sheet music, both popular and classic, and musical instruction books are kept in stock. A large line of the latter is one of the features of the merchandise and the proprietor makes a specialty in handling the books meant for teaching.

The Kimball instruments are sold at the store. While other makes are also kept in stock the Kimball are the leaders in the sales.

The floors are used in the display of the instruments. Three salesmen, a bookkeeper and a piano tuner, John Flanagan, are in the employ of the firm. Mr. Flanagan became connected with the firm 27 years ago, and with the exception of four years during that time, has been a constant workman for the concern.

BEAL TAILORING CO.

The name "Beal" has become a household word among the good dressers of the city. For nine years William M. Beal has been in the tailoring business at No. 1600 in the 1600 block. He represents Ed V. Price & Co. of Chicago, a universally known establishment.

Beal makes a specialty of a \$25 tailor made suit. He attempts to have his clothes just a little better for the money than it is possible to purchase elsewhere. He makes it an invariable rule not to allow a customer leave his place of business unsatisfied. The care he takes in giving every patron the full value of his money, and his honesty and fair dealing, are important factors in the success which he has attained.

Mr. Beal was one of the original boosters of the 1600 Block Business Men's association. He early saw the possibilities that would arise through a concerted, definite and aggressive effort for commercial advancement. He was made secretary of the association and has proven a real live wire. He not only boosts his own business, but has the interests of the whole 1600 block at heart. He is a hustler who has proven conclusively that the best and most permanent results in the commercial world are obtained through the constant use of progressive and honorable business methods.

HILL FURNITURE COMPANY.

The Hill Furniture company, occupying one of the largest stores in the 1600 block, was established in Rock Island in 1910. Jacob Hill, now manager and secretary-treasurer of the company, and G. Eberle instituted the business four years ago at 1816 Third avenue.

For eight months it was conducted under the firm name of Hill & Eberle and then the Hill Furniture company was incorporated, the stock holders being Mr. Hill and the S. Davidson Bros., who operate a large furniture store in Des Moines, Iowa. J. Davidson of Des Moines, is president of the

company. The stock held by Mr. Eberle was purchased by the Des Moines men.

Successful in every respect, the Hill Furniture company grew until its quarters on Third avenue became too small and the need for a newer and better location impressed itself on the stockholders. Last August the company decided to remove to 1615-1617 Second avenue, where the store is now located.

Before entering the new home the company had the store entirely remodeled and redecorated and new fixtures were installed, so that it is now one of the handsomest salesrooms in the city. The change the stockholders found an excellent one and each month the business grew even beyond expectation.

The company is incorporated with a capital stock of \$12,000 and household furnishings of the very latest design are kept in stock. Three floors, main, basement and second story, are used as display rooms and owing to the large floor space an excellent opportunity for a variety of stock to please all is offered.

The store has adopted the policy of a square deal and the customers can visit the place, inspect the stock and know that what is offered is of the best for the price asked.

PALACE DYE WORKS.

The Palace Dye works at 1514 Second avenue is the working headquarters of a string of branch agencies in many cities in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

Abraham Aronson, proprietor of the works, has had 17 years experience in the cleaning and dyeing business and employs a dozen people at the headquarters here.

Until about a year ago the main working plant was located in Chicago. However, as all of the cleaning and dyeing was sent to the headquarters, a place more centrally located, where better and quicker express service could be secured, was sought by the owner, and he finally decided to locate in Rock Island.

The Palace Dye works has a reputation for the quality of the work turned out. Particularly expert in the concern in the cleaning or dyeing of the more delicate textures. Ladies' wearing apparel as well as men's is attended to, and besides cleaning and dyeing a large patronage in the pressing department has been gained.

LODGING ROOMS KEPT.

The 1600 block also possesses excellent rooming facilities. The Schmidt hotel, 1613 1/2 Second avenue, Fred Schmidt, proprietor, the St. Johns house, 1626 1/2 Second avenue, Tom Kennedy proprietor, and John Forner's rooms at 1622 1/2, all furnish excellent lodging at reasonable prices.

WELLS FARGO EXPRESS CO.

The Rock Island office of the Wells Fargo Express company is located at 1605 Second avenue. C. H. Hoskinson has been manager for the last five years. The company operates on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad and the Rock Island Southern interurban.

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PLAYHOUSE HERE LEADING IN CITY

Illinois Theater Excelled by Few in Towns Size of Rock Island.

BUILT DOZEN YEARS AGO

In Seating Capacity, Stage Accommodations and General Facilities it Ranks High.

In the Illinois theatre, located at 1602 Second avenue, Rock Island has a playhouse that compares favorably with that of any other city of its class in the west. For artistic finish, arrangement and capacity, both in the matter of seats and stage rooms, it is not excelled anywhere outside of the cities of first magnitude.

The theatre was erected in 1901 by George H. Johnston, of St. Louis, on the advance seat sale plan, which has the advantage of adding to the public interest in its care and management through a feeling of personal proprietorship engendered.

The close of the advance seat sale was effected early in 1901 after a canvass had been conducted by the Rock Island club, assisted by the Retail Merchants' association.

The terms of Mr. Johnston called for a sale of seats for the opening play at \$10 each, amounting in the aggregate to \$10,000, upon which he agreed to erect a \$50,000 playhouse.

As soon as the sale was finished the erection of the theatre was begun and carried rapidly on, the opening play being given December 26, 1901. On that occasion every seat in the house was taken and society was out in full force.

Stage is Roomy.

Seldom has such an audience gathered beneath the roof of any playhouse, and few new buildings when first thrown open to the public have ever elicited more favorable comment from all beholders. The seating capacity of the house is 1400 including the galleries, and the stage affords sufficient room for the handling of the most elaborate scenic productions.

Acoustic properties are as nearly perfect as the science of the architect and the builder could make them.

Public appreciation of the theatre has been amply shown by the attendance that has greeted every creditable production that has appeared within its walls since its erection.

William J. Klink is present manager of the theatre and during the season just passed offered to Rock Island people a variety of the latest plays. Operas, dramas, musical comedies, high class burlesque, and moving pictures were shown at the house.

The first manager was Archie Cox, and the others who acted in that capacity prior to Mr. Klink were George Gorman and R. H. Taylor.

From the beginning the Illinois has been under lease as one of the Chamberlain-Kindt chain of theatres.